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Architecture, an inspiration for the revolutionary fashion design of the 20 th century

The first decades of the 20 th Century - Exercise of creativity for architecture students

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Synopsis

The 20 th century remains the most fascinating example for the way Architecture and art transformed, in a revolutionary way, our world, in particular, fashion and life style. The first decades of the century were the most important both in architecture and fashion design, from geometrical Art Nouveau to Modernism and International Style. They have changed the face of the cities, the way of living and the ideal of the human beauty, connecting architects, painters, musicians, philosophers, writers and fashion designers. Adolf Loos, was saying in the '20, that „ the costume is nothing else but a primary form of shelter”, and through the following decades architects and respected designers have created remarkable fashion works. At the course History of the costume, I have proposed to the students, exercises of creativity, which reveal the approach between architecture and the human body, a subtle message of volumes, forms, textures and colors.

Key words: 20 th Century, Architecture, fashion design, connections.

1. Introduction

Umberto Eco, one of the most important specialists in semiotic, defines architecture as „any form of design that creates three-dimensional constructions conceived in such way as to meet function related to life in society”; the same *modern guru* says: „clothes are artificial semiotic facts, in other words, instruments of communication” The indissoluble connection between the interior design and fashion design was noticed from the early times, but only in the XXth century, architects, designers and artists marked the special change of ideas between fashion and architecture, drawing in strong lines the portrait of an epoch and its spirit.

2. La Belle Époque and the Modernism

At the end of the 19th century, the Engineer's Architecture and the Industrial Design represent the essence of the shocking invention of this epoch: electricity, telephone, and the new structure of metal and concrete. But, the Art Nouveau Style triumphs and together with it a new ideal of feminine beauty. The heavy structures of the clothes are replaced by a new elegant line; the clepsidra silhouettes do fit in the new decors with vegetal motives which are curling on stairs, piles, windows and doors, furniture and lamps, the colors are sweet and the textures of silk and velvet, soft. Looks and the attitudes are changing with a high speed, as well as the new styles and currents. The first image „spatial-dynamic” of the modern art, was born in architecture, before the cubism in paintings: the famous hall of Hill House, designed in 1902 by Ch. R. Mackintosh. Trying to find a way between the male ideal of beauty- the prototype of the bourgeoisie, gray, respectable and prosaically, and the female ideal of beauty – the fatal beauty, inaccessible, mysterious. In the same year, Gabrielle Coco Chanel started her big adventure in the world of fashion. In Paris, The „King of Fashion”, Paul Poiret, in the elaboration of the catalogue „Les choses de Paul Poiret”. The Poiret House started to create and to market furniture, objects of sets (decor) and perfumes, promoting the concept of „total life style”, that united fashion and interior design.



Figure 1. Paul Poiret - Interior & Fashion design.
(O'HARA, 2000, Interieurs Art Deco, Paris, Editions Thames & Hudson SARL, [1990, Art Deco Interiors, London, Ed. Thames & Hudson,], pg. 65)

In 1911, all the arts can be found in one palace : Palace Stoclet, in Bruxelles.¹

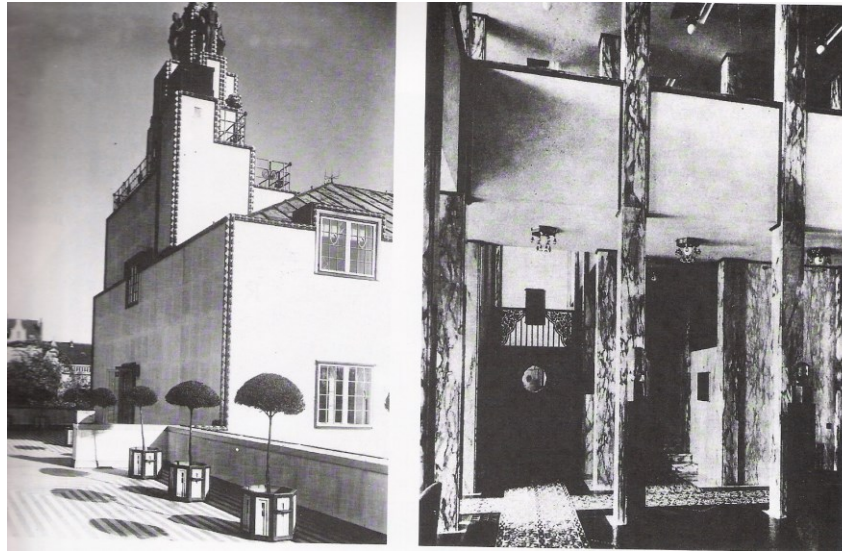


Figure 2. Stoclet Palace , Bruxelles.

(FERRIER, Jean-Louis, 1999, L'aventure de l'art au XXe siècle, Paris, Edition du Chêne-Hachette Livre, pg. 127

Inspired by this extraordinary work of art, Chanel launches simple and casual clothes designated for a new idea of beauty: the powerful woman active and independent. The colors were sober, much black color was worn. „1914 changed everything: the old world was destroyed , condensed, buried” declared Le Corbusier. Between 1914 and 1918, women faced an un-previous transformation and not only because they were obliged to do men's work who were gone on the front. Chanel launches simple and casual clothes designated for a new ideal of beauty: the powerful woman active and independent. The colors were sober, much black color was worn for the mourning.²

Mondrian's neo-plasticist paintings and the fabulous projects of “The City of the Future” signed by Antonio Sant'Ella are sources of inspiration for Chanel and for the vanguard couturiers.

For the workshop “Inspiration Modernism”, the students from the course History of the costume choosed for their creations unconventional materials as paper, plastic and metal and designed volumes and shapes in non colours. The challenge contained in understanding the spirit of the new era, at the beginning of the twenty-th century, the dramatic transformations not only in fashion or interior design, but the human ideals in social life and politics.

¹ FERRIER, Jean-Louis, 1999, L'aventure de l'art au XXe siècle, Paris, Edition du Chêne-Hachette Livre, ISBN : 2.84 277.181.8, pg.127

² BAYER, Patricia, 1993, The Encyclopedia of Fashion, Thames & Hudson, London, pg.69



Figure 3. Workshop : Costume design, inspiration: structures and new technology of the '20.



Figure 4. Workshop – Inspiration Modernism ; volumes and graphic shapes in white and black.

3. From Bauhaus to Surrealism, the birth of L'avant-garde

In 1919 history is written in Weimar and the Bauhaus School wants to invent the future. And it succeeds! Walter Gropius and the extraordinary Bauhaus team of architects and artists, have created the base of geometrical pure volumes and forms and, also, a philosophy based on “less is more”.³

³ O'HARA , 2000, Interieurs Art Deco, Paris, Editions Thames & Hudson SARL , [1990, Art Deco Interiors, , London,



Figure 5. Bauhaus - Interior Design Felix del Marle – inspiration Mondrian.
O'HARA , 2000, Interieurs Art Deco, Paris, Editions Thames & Hudson SARL , [1990, Art Deco Interiors, , London, Ed. Thammes &Hudson,] , pg.22

Bauhaus reloaded represented one of the most important themes for a workshop, exhibition, and even a fashion parade. The famous school changed the world for ever and students were very involved to discover the exceptional transformations in architecture, art and design, in fact, a new world, after the First World War.

They have experienced the new compositions, in a Mondrian style, the colours described by Johannes Itten, the geometric volumes signed by the greatest architects of the '20s and '30s (fig.6 & 6 *).



Figure 6. Workshop : Bauhaus Reloaded – the influence of Itten and Mondrian, with a punk touch.

Ed. Thammes &Hudson,] pg.22

Architecture, an inspiration for the revolutionary fashion design of the 20 th century
Ruse, Stefania Victoria

Auguste Peret, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier are the new “Gods” of Architecture, who will influence the most important fashion designers. Adolf Loos himself, was saying in the '20, that „the costume is nothing else but a primary form of shelter”, and in the following decades, architects and respected designers have created fashion works. The male-female beauty ideal is represented by the straight silhouette lacking ornaments with an austere line – the unisex fashion is born! Women adopt a boyish hair cut, they appear with flat breast and hips so that their silhouette are alike the new modern buildings. The emphasized vertical line similar to that of the sky scrapers has in counterpoint the horizontal line of the cigarette which is a necessary element for the emancipated women never giving up the cigarette even in the street. The influence of the Extreme Orient is important for the art deco style that gets a shape. Eileen Gray proposed interiors of an extraordinary modernity combining geometries and the exotic elements with non colors, and Chanel proposed a fashion design item that will rapidly impose and will resist more than a century – „the little black dress”. Sonia Delaunay designs graphic dresses inspired by the Russian Ballet (Fig 9).

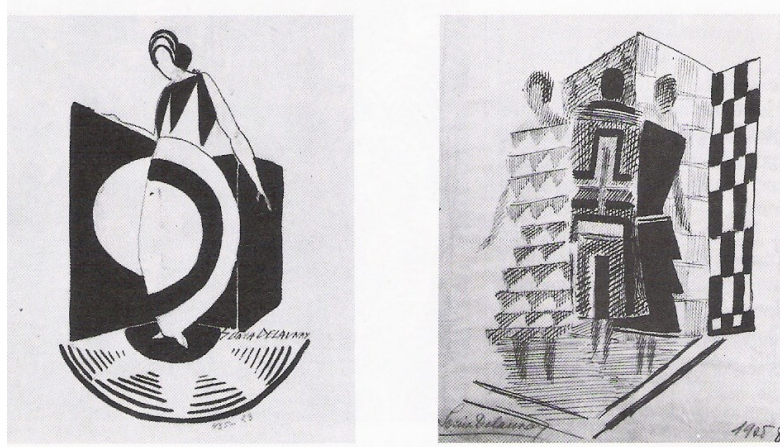


Figure 7. Sonia Delaunay – fashion design.

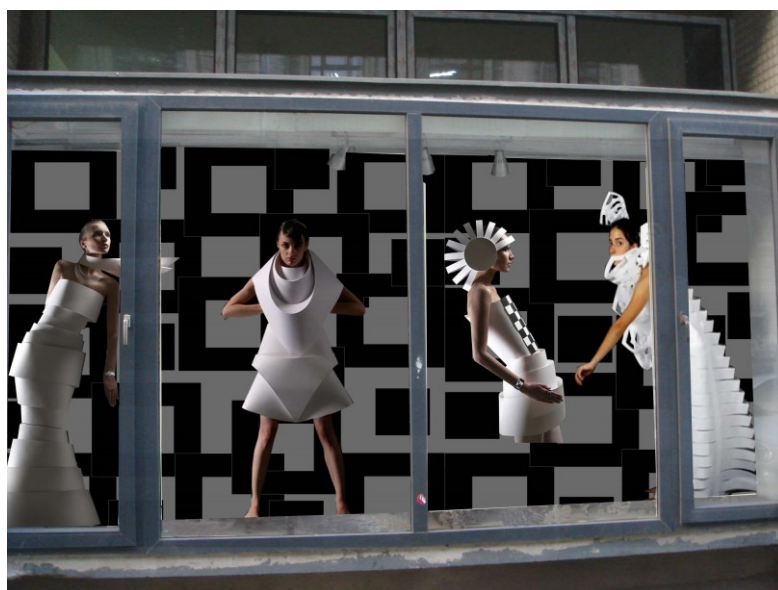


Figure 8. Modernism and Surrealism - Volumes and shapes – workshop and window design at the University of Architecture and Urbanism Ion Mincu, Bucharest.

Architecture, an inspiration for the revolutionary fashion design of the 20 th century
Ruse, Stefania Victoria



Figure 9. Workshop : Modern Ballerina - inspiration Modernism & Surrealism. Faculty of Interior Architecture.

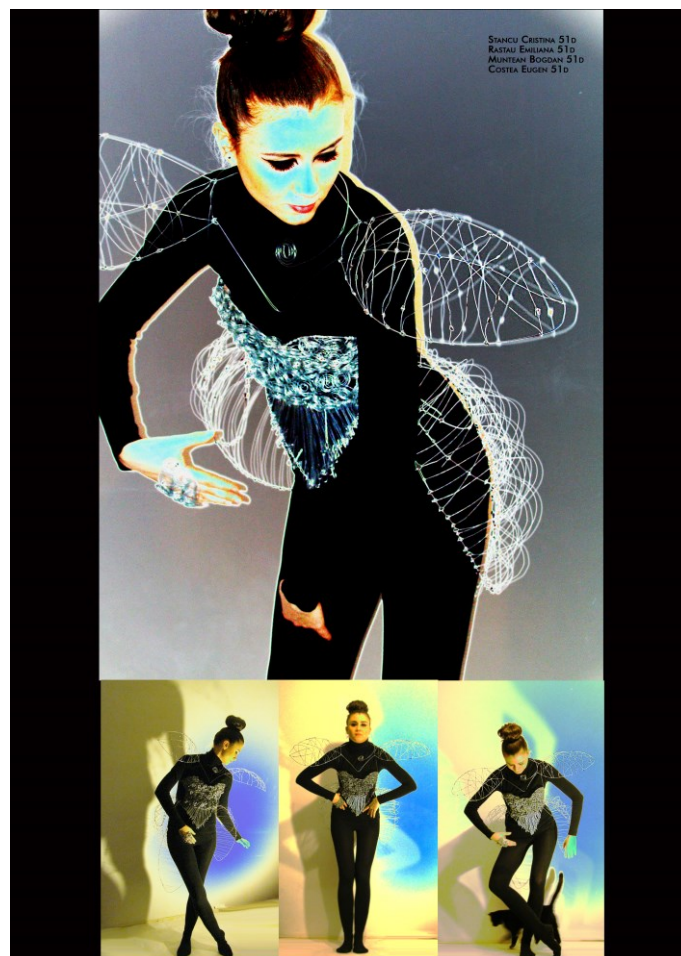


Figure 10. Workshop : Jewel Costume –surrealism & metal structures.

Architecture, an inspiration for the revolutionary fashion design of the 20 th century
Ruse, Stefania Victoria

In 1924 the surrealism begins with the “manifest” of Andre Breton. Magritte and Chirico were drawing landscapes with impossible, fantastic architecture which have inspired generations of fashion designers, up to Alexander McQueen, Yamamoto and Jean Paul Gautier. From far the most visible artist for this style, Salvador Dali doesn't resume his work only at painting, but, designs interiors, furniture, clothes, jewels. He collaborated with Elsa Schiaparelli, a visionary artist, adored by Miro and Jean Cocteau. The lobster dress, the tears dress and the extravagant accessories, remain famous in the History of Costume. In a world of contrasts, between Great Gatsby and the extreme poverty, they offered the alternative of a dream where everything was possible and accepted.

This was the theme of workshop which proposed a journey in the '30s. The students analyzed this decade, starting with literature, music, visual arts, social and economic life. The world of dreams, Hollywood movie stars, famous ballet shows were the sources of inspiration. Their creations had contemporary replicas, especially for the scene costumes, the extravagance of Madonna or Lady Gaga, the art of Morski or Setowski. (Fig.10 and Fig.11).



Figure 11. Workshop Surrealism reloaded. Faculty of Interior Architecture.

4. Conclusions

The first decades of the 20-th century were also an important source of inspiration for the projects and the workshops of my students, at the Course History of the Costume. In their creations, Modernism has melted into the styles of the last 50 years of the last century: popart, Punk, brutalism, post modernism,

DE constructivism, revealing the approach between architecture and the human body, a subtle message of volumes, forms, textures and colors. So, they have created costumes and artistic installations „moving structures” from conventional and unconventional materials, in a personal interpretation.

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Biography

Stefania Victoria Ruse. Born in Bucharest, Stefania Victoria Ruse gets remarked since childhood for her skills in painting, poetry, ballet and film; so, her passion for visual and non visual arts will lead her to architecture.

After graduating the High School of Architecture and then the University of Architecture and Urbanism Ion Mincu, Bucharest, SVR takes part at many contests and exhibitions of graphic and object design, initiating the first design exhibitions and fashion parades for students in Romania.

Together with a group of young architects, initiates shows in which they combine music, artistic installation, object, fashion design and ballet .

She signs projects in architecture, interior design, set decoration for film and and theatre in paralel with the academic career, publishing articles, books, organizing workshops and participating at national and international conferences .

The University remains my beloved home; so, as through the last decades, I have created architectural objects, pictorially interiors, scenography, fashion, textile, graphic or object design, I kept one dream alive : my work with the students."

Last book : Figure and fond, the identity of the objects and the interior space. Ed. Paideia, 2013, Bucharest.